

## **How to Incorporate the EPCA Findings Into the Planning Process**

States and Field Offices will assess their current planning status to determine which of the following categories their land use plans fall into. The first three categories pertain to current, ongoing planning efforts. The last category applies to plans not currently being revised or amended.

### **1. Pre-Alternative Development (Scoping/Analysis of the Management Situation)**

Plans just being initiated or in the early stages of development represent the best opportunity to incorporate the EPCA findings. Therefore, States and Field Offices with plans at this stage are directed to take maximum advantage of the EPCA findings and incorporate them to the fullest extent.

The EPCA data can generally be divided into two categories: 1) data on leasing constraints (the Land Access Categorization data) and 2) oil and gas resource data (volumetric data on the amounts of undiscovered oil and gas resources within the EPCA basins).

The Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenario predicts management activities and actions, including development, that are likely to occur in the planning area over the life of the plan assuming continuation of existing management. The EPCA oil and gas resource data will be included in the information used to develop RFDs for these new plans. These data will be of use in the delineation of exploration and development potential for the planning area.

Both types of EPCA data will be used in the development of the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), specifically to characterize the Resource Area Profile (which provides the basis for the Affected Environment), portray the Existing Management Situation (which provides the basis for the No Action/Present Management Alternative), and identify Management Opportunities (which provide the basis for the action alternatives).

The EPCA data can be used alone for display purposes or in combination with other resource data for analysis purposes (such as overlaying high potential oil and gas areas with important wildlife habitats to identify areas of conflict and/or potential opportunities for resolving specific issues).

States and Field Offices are also directed to review the guidance in Attachment 3 on how to assess the effectiveness and continued need for existing resource-related constraints and closures in the formulation of the action alternatives and fully assessing the environmental impacts associated with the alternatives.

## 2. Pre-Draft (Alternative Development)

At this stage of plan development, States and Field Offices have several options for incorporating the EPCA findings. At a minimum, the EPCA findings will be used to develop a reasonable range of alternatives. This range of alternatives is necessary to understand the full effects of existing stipulations and other management options, either more or less restrictive.

An option for non-Time Sensitive Plans (TSPs) may be to take additional time to incorporate the EPCA findings into their AMS and then review how that may affect their range of alternatives that, in some cases, have already been developed. If States or Field Offices feel this would be a more viable option for them and it means adjusting their schedules, they should submit a request for a schedule change.

## 3. Post-Draft Plan/EIS or Proposed Plan/Final EIS

At these stages, there is less flexibility to make major changes to incorporate the EPCA findings. Significant changes would require supplementing the draft or final EISs, along with probable major schedule delays. It is also assumed the energy related TSPs are being developed with the goal of providing responsible access to the public lands for energy exploration and development. Therefore, except for very limited and unusual circumstances, the EPCA findings will be incorporated into these land use plans after they are completed by amendment or revision, where needed.

## 4. Completed/Not Scheduled (Existing Plans)

These plans may require amendment or revision to incorporate the EPCA findings. States and Field Offices should follow the guidance in the Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1 in determining the need for amendment or revision. States and Field Offices will also review the guidance in Attachment 3 on how to assess the effectiveness and continued need for existing resource-related constraints and closures in determining the need to amend or revise their land use plans.